

Brenda Gibson Stewart Interview Summary

Interviewee: Brenda Gibson Stewart

Interviewers: Jack Perry and Jessica “Jesse” Spencer

Interview date: October 18, 2023

Interview location: Christopher Newport University’s Paul and Rosemary Triple Library, Study Room 211, Newport News, VA

Length: 1 audio file, MP3 format, 37:06

THE INTERVIEWEE: Brenda Gibson Stewart was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1954 and moved to Newport News, Virginia with her family as a child. There, she attended Huntington High School before being reassigned to Menchville High School as part of the city’s court-ordered bussing program to desegregate local schools. She graduated from Menchville in 1972. She later attended the Virginia School of Hair Design and Dudley Cosmetology University. She has spent the past forty-four years as a cosmetologist, styling hair. She has also served as a deaconess at New Mount Olive Baptist Church.

THE INTERVIEWERS: Jack Perry and Jessica “Jesse” Spencer are both students at Christopher Newport University. They conducted this interview as part of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project in conjunction with Dr. Laura Puaca’s “Long Civil Rights Movement” course.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: This interview documents Stewart’s life growing up in Newport News. She especially loved her experiences at Huntington High School, which continues to have a special place in her heart. She remembered being devastated upon learning that she was reassigned to Menchville High School in 1971, for her senior year, as part of the court-ordered bussing plan that the city adopted and that resulted in the transformation of Huntington into a middle school. Stewart described the transition to Menchville as a painful one, and how she never felt at home there. Towards the end of the interview, Stewart spoke about her strong Christian faith and the role it has played in her life.

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START OF INTERVIEW

Jack Perry: Good afternoon, my name is Jack Perry and I am here with—.

Jessica “Jesse” Spencer: Jessica Spencer.

JP: And—

Brenda Stewart: Brenda Stewart.

JP: And we are conducting this interview on behalf of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project.

The date is October 18, 2023, and the time is 1:55 pm. Are you ready to get started?

BS: Yes, I am!

JP: Okay.

BS: Mm-hmm.

JP: Thank you for meeting with us today.

JS: Yes, thank you.

BS: My pleasure.

JP: Alrighty, so we’re gonna go ahead and we have a list of questions here for you.

JS: Yes.

JP: We’ve provided you with a copy to follow along.

JS: Here you go.

JP: And we're going to sort of alternate. We're going to alternate off and on, sort of do it like that if that works.

BS: Okay.

JP: Okay. Starting with the first question, could you introduce yourself and tell us when and where you were born?

BS: My name is Brenda Gibson Stewart. I was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey on April 22nd of 1954.

JS: Perfect! And when did your family move to Virginia?

BS: My family moved to Virginia when I was four.

JS: And what brought them here?

BS: Military. My father was Navy.

JP: Did you like the neighborhoods that you grew up in? Did you enjoy living there?

BS: I did, I really did. It was wholesome. People loved one another [and were] neighborly. Yup, it really was a good neighborhood. Everybody was mom and dad.

JP: Wonderful, wonderful.

JS: So we're gonna transition to your experiences about attending some of the city's segregated schools before they started integrating. So the first question we have is: what was the community like at Huntington High School?

BS: Oh, Huntington High School was the best. It was the best. We were blessed with staff and administrators who really had a heart for educating the children and making us feel loved as well, and disciplined.

JP: So as far as your experience at Huntington, what was the educational experience like?

Some of the classes and lectures and so on?

BS: Well, it was pretty much you had people, had instructors, that really worked hard with you if you had a problem and whatever. Like mine would have been math. I take that back—Earth space science, ‘cause that’s the only place where I really, in school, had a problem with science. And Earth space science, really. But the rest of the time, I really had instructors that really worked hard to help us to pass.

JS: Nice. So, do you mind just elaborating a little bit more on what your teachers were like at Huntington, how they taught, that kind of stuff?

BS: Our teachers were really, I could say really administrators, because they really knew how to reach you right where you were. You know like, if you had a situation with maybe communicating, you know, they would make you talk. You know, like get it out: “What were you saying?” And you may not have been saying anything, but your facial features let them know there was something that needed to be said. And then, they were disciplinarians. You know, whereas when they said, “Don’t chew in class,” they meant no chewing in class. You know, or “no sleeping in class,” or “no talking in class.” But, you know, of course you had those that would do that and still get caught. I did one time. The teacher kept telling me, “Brenda, no chewing gum in class.” And he was a young teacher, so I thought that I could get away with it. Not. So he sent me to the office and that was the first time. And I was devastated because I knew that if I took a letter home from school for me chewing gum after having—‘cause they would specify how many times they would tell you to not do it. And I cried in the class in front of everybody. I said, “Please don’t send me to the office. Please don’t send me to the office.” But, nevertheless, he did, and that was a sore spot for a long time [laughter] with the teacher. But I was able to overcome that, and no more chewing in class. [laughter]

JP: That rule still stands today.

BS: Yeah.

JP: I think you're still not allowed to chew in class.

BS: Exactly.

JP: I know I wasn't in high school.

BS: Right. Mm-hmm.

JP: All right. Thank you for sharing that.

BS: Mm-hmm. My pleasure.

JP: Our next question for you is what was the social life like at Huntington?

BS: Oh, that was the best. That was really the down setting for when the schools were closing is that we were so, such a sociable school—you know with the games, because we were tops in the game play and just, you know, we always had assemblies, you know, where we could come together and hear people singing and dancing and doing all of that and that. And when that was just no longer in place, it was a hard place.

JS: Thank you for sharing that.

BS: Mm-hmm.

JS: So, did you participate in any extracurriculars—

BS: Oh yeah.

JS: Or any clubs there?

BS: Yeah, I did. I was a [pep] leader, I pretty much—. Well, pep leader I'd put it like that: pep leader. And basketball. I played basketball, softball, gymnastics. You know, pretty much sports, [I was] into sports, really much. Yup, and excelled in it. Yup.

JP: Next question that we have for you, Mrs. Stewart, is speaking more broadly, how did you feel about your overall experience at Huntington, on the whole?

BS: I think it was one of the best experiences that I encountered as a child, you know, because basically, there was so much love there, you know, and so much, you know, heartfelt. Like I was able to speak to one of my teachers, about a couple of weeks ago, and I was thanking him for his impature—you know, what he did for me, you know—‘cause I had purchased something for him. And he said “How much do I owe you?” and I said “You don’t owe me anything because you paid your dues for me, as far as I’m concerned you know, because of the places and things you did for me and education when I was in school.” And he just was overwhelmed with that answer to why I didn’t want him to purchase it.

JP: Wow, that’s wonderful.

JS: That’s amazing.

BS: Thank you.

JS: Okay, our next question for you is how did you hear about Huntington closing?

BS: Oh my God, that was so devastating. I was in a program at Hampton University called Upward Bound. I don’t know if y’all are familiar with Upward Bound. And, so me and some other girls who were students at Huntington, we were all in my room and this girl came running up the hall with a newspaper. And she was crying, you know, overwhelmed with the fact that they said that. Now this was, mind you, two weeks before school was starting and they told us that we weren’t gonna have—. Huntington was shutting down. And so when she came in we just had tears flowing, it was just overwhelmingly sad, you know, because of that—the way we found out—one of the things. And we had no clue that that was gonna happen and it was just devastating. It was something that I’ll never forget, you know, that time and space because it was

just so heartbreaking. And we had just—. You know, like Huntington was one of those schools, like I said, that was heartfelt, and people were close you know and things like that. So it really was affecting each of us, you know, that we weren't gonna be together. And everytime I think about it I get emotional. So yeah, it was heartbreaking.

JS: Thank you for sharing that.

BS: Mm-hmm.

JS: We really appreciate it.

BS: Mm-hmm.

JP: So, just to clarify: the main way that you found out about the closing of Huntington was through a newspaper?

BS: A newspaper.

JP: That a friend shared.

BS: Yeah, that a friend shared, running down the hall crying. Yeah, she couldn't believe it, we couldn't believe it. We said, "Let me see it, let me see it." You know, we had to see it for ourselves in the newspaper because we couldn't believe what she was saying and so we all embraced each other after that in my room on campus.

JP: Was that a local newspaper?

BS: Yes.

JP: Do you know which newspaper it was?

BS: It was probably—'cause it was in the morning, it was *Daily Press* 'cause at that time it was *Daily Press* in the morning and *Times Herald* in the evening. So this was, like, in the morning when she brought the paper to us.

JP: And this was two weeks before school was to start?

BS: Yeah, two weeks before school started. It was the end of August, because we finished the program at—well, we didn't really finish it—but we didn't stay on campus for two weeks after that. And that's how we found out. And that was our senior year of school so that was more devastating than anything else because we already had our class rings, you know, and just our memories. And all of those things that were already in place that we had to make changes, you know because of it. But we were allowed to—I don't know if this is for further down—we were allowed to have “Huntington” [High School] put on our diplomas and also, you know, we already had our class ring. And even now we still have our reunions, the junior class of Huntington.

JP: Wow.

BS: Yep.

JP: Did you—? Just going back to—. I'm interested in hearing about how you heard about this.

BS: Right.

JP: So, after you saw the announcement in the newspaper, was it covered elsewhere? Was it covered in the news?

BS: It stayed, I think, for a while then, after we found out. We started investigating, you know, just getting deeper with seeing who knew what. And especially with the administrators, you know, because school was open for summer school. And we started calling and asking them and they were devastated as well, you know. But they had to tell us the truth; “Yeah, we're moving on and you'll be going to whatever school in your zone.” You know, so that's what happened and it was just heartbreaking.

JP: Do you think—

BS: It was—

JP: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off.

BS: No problem.

JP: Do you think that the teachers and administrators at Huntington were made aware prior to when you were made aware of the closing?

BS: I can't say but it didn't get out, you know. So, I'm just thinking that maybe they just got the news when we got it. You know, because most of the time, a lot of the teachers were like neighborhood teachers, you know, where we would know them and they would tell-. They would tell us if they knew. I think they would tell us but I don't even think that they knew. If they did, they kept it. [laughter] Yeah.

JS: And how did the rest of the community react when you found out?

BS: Oh, about the same, you know, because our community was a community, really, of Vikings. That's what we called ourselves, the Vikings--our nickname rather. And, we just loved that school, you know, and that neighborhood, you know. And not just-. It wasn't necessarily the community where I lived 'cause it was further than that. You know, it was all over the city, where there were members that were students that were from other communities that were affected.

JS: Thank you. Okay, so now if it's ok with you, we'd like to learn a little bit more about your experiences with school desegregation?

BS: Well, I had-. Prior to that, I had already went to segregated schools, like when I was in sixth grade. So that wasn't nothing new for me, you know. I had no problem with the desegregation, or none of that. It was just the fact that Huntington was shut down, you know. And that was our heart really, you know. That wasn't a factor but when I did, the school that I ended up is that, "Should I be going there?" Okay. The school I ended up going to was Menchville, and I don't

know if y'all are familiar with-. Let me see, Salters Creek? You ever heard of Salters Creek? It's like Maple Avenue, like off of-. It's not the East end of town, but it's not far from the East end of town. But it's a section called Salters Creek. And we were bused from there where we, at that time, we had to catch the bus at like 7:15 in the morning and take the journey, you know, to Menchville from that distance. So, a lot of it was frustration, you know, from having to get up early and get on a bus, and half of us were sleeping on the bus trying to get to school, you know, and it was, it was really a different time in life for me.

JP: Do you happen to know the number of miles increase that you traveled each morning to school, or the increase in time it took to get to school compared to when you went to Huntington?

BS: Yes, it took-. Okay, it would take us fifteen minutes to get to Huntington on the bus from where I lived, but it would take us almost 45 minutes, you know, to get to Menchville. But that was with no stops. You know, that's just like from that community we lived in straight to Menchville. But from Huntington, from where I lived to Huntington with the stops, it was fifteen minutes.

JP: Wow.

BS: Mm-hmm, yep.

JS: And what was your first impression of Menchville when you first got there?

BS: You want me to be honest?

JP: Absolutely.

JS: Yeah.

BS: I hated it. I did, I actually hated it. And it was because of-. I could never make my adjustment my senior year. I never made the adjustment of being in another school. I didn't take

part in anything. I got out of school like 11:30 [AM] every day just to keep from spending time there. I could've picked up some other courses for, you know, the (long keep? 15:12), but I just—. My heart was so hurt. I was really, really hurt. I don't—. I'm gonna tell you the only thing I remember about Menchville—and that's the sad part 'cause I graduated from there—was how cold it was in the school. You know, like the temperature, you know, just sitting there in class, just shivering and all. That's all I remember about Menchville, which is so sad, you know. I wasn't no longer in the pep rallies and in the games or, you know, not in any activities. It just kind of blew me away, it did.

JP: Why do you think it was so much colder in that school?

BS: I don't know. I don't know. It was just so different. Well, Huntington—. Well, I guess because Menchville was a new school so, you know, the facilities and all that is gonna be better. And Huntington was an old school, you know, so it was heated up all the time, you know. And it's a shame, but that's what I remember about Menchville, how cold it was and how sitting in the class shivering, trying to get it in and just too cold, you know. And even some other people that I talked to said, "All I remember about Menchville is being cold!" You know, so I'm just—. I don't know why it was cold but it was really cold.

JP: Did you ever find that interfered with learning?

BS: Yes, it does because you can't concentrate. Yeah, you can't concentrate when you're cold [laughter] Yup, shivering, yeah.

JS: What was your first day like, if you can remember it at all?

BS: The first day. It was like—. Crying: we were crying 'cause when we got there it was just—. I guess then it was reality. You know, it was like reality kicked in. This is where—. This is where you're gonna be for the next year, so you may as well make the best of it. And that was for me,

going—doing my work—and going home. That was it no, not really—. And then the people that I was affiliated with at Huntington, most of them went to other schools so that was a double heartbreak you know, not being with the people that I had spent my other four years with, you know. So it was just a different place in life for me. You know, something that I'll never forget. I'll never forget because it was just that traumatic. Yeah. And not so much as the educational part of it. I think it's the social part of it too, you know, because that's basically where young people, how young people think, you know, at that time. But now I think different you know. But then, it was just, you know, the sociable time that we had. And then it was such a spirited school, you know, with winning, you know like sports and you know, just—. We had a good band and we had good football, basketball, you know. And then we had the kids that were say, like, smart. You know, you knew front and center who was what. You know, it was a school that really had it going on. That's the way to really put it. Yeah.

JP: If you wanted to—. If the students from Huntington wanted to participate in sports and other extracurriculars, were there opportunities for that?

BS: Oh yeah, mm-hmm. There really was, yup

JS: So, when you were at Menchville, do you remember what the racial makeup was there? For either the students or the faculty or staff?

BS: I didn't see any division or anything like that. All I saw was I didn't wanna be there. You know, that's all I saw. I didn't see—. The teachers were no different from the other teachers. It's just that it's harder to reach people when they're not there. You know, it really is. It's hard to reach people when they're not there because, if they're not there, they're somewhere else, you know: in mind, you know, and even in their pattern of how they do things. You know, because that's just how it was for us. You know, we were always so high-spirited, you know, with

whatever we did. And just to get to a place where it's just nothing going on. And it was—. At Menchville, it was not—. The pep rallies weren't like the pep rallies we had at Huntington, you know, because it was so high end. That's what it was, it was high end, you know. But it's something that you remember. Memories—

JP: Absolutely.

BS: Memories are heartbreak: good, great. What'd I say? Memories are great, memories are hard. Wait, what is it? Memories are great, but they're such heartbreaks as well. You know, you can remember, yeah, the good times and then you remember the bad times. But when you think about the bad times in your senior year more than the good times, then that's something to think about.

JP: Absolutely.

BS: Yeah, mm-hmm.

JP: So just following along, I think we're around question 15, Jesse, is that what you have?

JS: I think so, yeah.

JP: Okay. So our next question for you is: how were you perceived by and treated by the White students at Menchville?

BS: Well, you know, like I said, I had no problem with the Whites, you know, 'cause when you love, you love. You know, it's not a burial, you know, or nothing like that. So we didn't have any problems with that; them showing love. Nope, we didn't. I didn't.

JP: Would you say that the students who were already at Menchville before the students from Huntington came were open to having new students in their school from another school?

BS: Well, this was the first year of the school, period. Menchville was the first year. So our year, our first year—

JP: Okay.

BS: So our year, our first year there, was the first year that it opened.

JP: Okay.

BS: So it was not—. No transitioning [for the White students at Menchville], you know, because it was a new school.

JP: I see, right. Okay.

BS: Mm-hmm.

JP: I had forgotten that date. And that was which year?

BS: 1972. It was the 71-72 school year, you know. But it was '71 when we came there in August and that was the first graduating class of Menchville.

JS: My next question is: what were your relationships with your teachers like, and were you treated any differently than the White students at Menchville?

BS: I don't see a difference. I didn't, no. And there's sometimes you look for things, I didn't look for that 'cause all I wanted to do was go to school and go home. You know, it wasn't—. I didn't spend a lot of time there, you know. And my heart wasn't there, you know. So that's [sighs] telling the truth. [laughter]

JP: Absolutely.

BS: Yeah.

JP: And that's exactly what needs to be shared.

BS: Yep.

JP: Truly.

BS: Yep.

JP: You've touched on this before, but if you could pick a couple things that you missed most about Huntington, what would they be?

BS: The love, the love shown. You know, because we were a unit, you know. And we were loved. We were so—. It wasn't—. It was just a different place and time, you know, and I think it was much needed at the time, you know, because of the times that we were living in. And we didn't have a whole lot, but we had so much love for each other, you know. And like love to me is tops, you know. And that's where it was with the teachers and with the administrators, with the janitors. You know, everybody that had their hands to do anything in Huntington, it was just that love shown.

JP: Wow.

JS: Yeah.

BS: It was just so much love, it really was. I'm not making up stuff, either. It's the truth.

JP: Absolutely.

JS: Yeah.

BS: Yeah, mm-hmm. Yeah.

JS: Wow. Okay. So overall, how would you describe your experience at Menchville?

BS: My experience at Menchville was—is something that I don't even care to remember. That's the truth.

JS: Yeah, yeah.

BS: It is, you know, because of the heartbreak. You know, and if I was—. If I was at that place that I am today, I might [or] could have done better with what I was feeling. But it was just—. It was such a heartbreak. Yup, it really was. But my brother, he loves Menchville [laughter] because he didn't—. They were like—. He was like two or three years down from me so he spent

most of his time there. But that was a different [situation]. Now he, when he says something to me about Menchville, he tell people, "Oh, she graduated from Menchville too." I said, "Don't you say that. Don't you say it because it's Huntington on my diploma." You know, or whatever and in my heart. He said "Yeah,, but she was heartbroken. She was heartbroken." And I said "Yes." [laughter]. But my brothers and my sisters, they went to Menchville and they all loved Menchville.

JS: Right.

JP: How many siblings do you have?

BS: I had eleven. I got nine now.

JS: Oh wow.

BS: I had one pass last month, and one to pass in 2014 on a motorcycle.

JS and JP: I'm sorry.

BS: In Virginia Beach. So, he was right under me [in age] and then the one who passed last month is my oldest brother.

JP: I'm sorry to hear that.

JS: I'm really sorry.

BS: Thank you.

JP: Did most of your siblings also attend [Menchville]?

BS: Huntington.

JP: Huntington and then Menchville?

BS: Well, I had three to Huntington and three to Menchville.

JS: Okay, so how did your experience at Huntington prepare you for the real world outside of high school? Or did it?

BS: Well, yeah, it did. It did. It showed me, in so many avenues, that—. To be honest would be one, you know. And to be the best that I could be, you know, and keep my focus, and to stay the course, you know, and stay out of trouble. Yep.

JP: Our next question is: what was your life like after graduating?

BS: Well, after graduating, I went to beauty school. You know, where I am now, a forty-four-year cosmetologist, you know. And I'm still working.

JP: Wonderful.

JS: Amazing.

JP: Did you stay in Newport News after graduating?

BS: Let me see. How long did we stay in Newport News? Maybe a couple years afterwards, after high school, and then we moved to Hampton.

JP: Well, that was most of our questions that we had for you, but we still have plenty of time.

BS: Okay.

JP: If there's anything else you'd like to add.

JS: Yeah.

JP: If you would just like to just, you know, tell us anything. You could tell us whatever you think is—

BS: Needed.

JP: Pertinent or needed.

BS: Right, right.

JP: Absolutely. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

BS: I think that, with what I went through—. And you know, just the way I found out that school was closed and if there was some idea—. In the future, if they have any idea that there is any such

thing that they may even be thinking about doing, to let people know up front. You know, not to wait until, you know, like two weeks before school getting ready to start 'cause that's the devastation. You know, it's time. You know, and so time is everything. To everything, there's a time and season and I know that there are reasons why people do things and they can't. I don't know what happened to the Newport News school system when they came up with that idea to do that, or what drove them to that 'cause, you know, 'cause I never, really even cared, you know, after that point. I'm honest, I'm being honest. I never cared about why it happened, you know. But that it did, you know. And it made such a difference. But what I've learned in time passed, since then, is that things change. And we're not always ready for change, but when they do—. When we do come upon changes, we have to make the adjustment. But, I think that being young is where I was stagnant. You know, the fact that you don't think quite like it is—I'm a born-again believer too—that when you're young, you think like you're young, you know. But when you get older, you put away those childish things or the way, you thought, you know, and you think different. And so now that's where I am in life. I'm thinking different because of maturity of life, and life changes, and life benefits and all of that, you know. So, it's rewarding now when I look back. And I see, you know, some of the pitholes and some of the things that I had to endure that made me the person that I am today, you know. And when I say Menchville was a nightmare for me, it's literally. But it was still a blessing because I've overcome that, you know, so—. And when you can overcome things in life, all you can do is thank God for 'em, you know, because it's all in his plan for you and it all—. It makes you the person that you think you are. And if we don't have any obstacles that will bring us back from where we come from to be thankful for, you know, it would be in vain. But, it's not in vain, the things that I've been through in my life to get to where I am now 'cause all I can do is praise God, you know. From where he

brought me—and the times—and this opportunity allotted me to even voice it, you know, ‘cause I have it—. I tell people—like I’ve talked to Audrey [Audrey Perry Williams, who recruited her to participate in the interview] and whoever else—when you say anything to me about Huntington, it’s heartfelt you know. It’s a heart thing, you know so—. And with Menchville it was just something that happened in my life that I can’t reckon—you know, I can’t even think about—as being good for me then, but now I do, you know, because of some things that you go through in life that bring you to that place of praise.

JP: Absolutely.

JS: Beautifully said.

BS: [laughter] It is. It’s because that’s my heart. You know, my heart is now to be a witness, you know, to others of the life that I lived and the life that I’m now living, you know, which is in Christ you know. And it makes all the difference to me to impart—even with you two sitting here—to impart the way I feel in my heart, you know because I have been born-again you know. And my thought pattern has changed. And, even with the scars of life, because that was a scar for me—you know, leaving Huntington to go to Menchville—but it’s also one of the blessings in my life, you know, because I can remember from which I came.

JS: Thank you.

JP: We’re incredibly grateful for you sharing your story with us.

JS: Yes.

BS: Thank you.

JP: Absolutely, thank you.

BS: Thank you for this opportunity.

JS: Thank you so much.

BS: Yeah.

JP: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? Because as I said in the beginning, this is your chance to share anything that you might want to, anything at all. About your story, about your life, if you'd like to talk more about your childhood growing up, moving to Virginia maybe?

BS: Yeah.

JP: Anything you like, because this interview is something that people will be able to—

BS: (There you go? 32:23) —

JP: Listen back on for years to come.

BS: Well, one thing that I do is, everywhere I go, I ask people that I encounter with, do they know Jesus [?]. That means more to me than any interview or any conversation I have, because there's gonna come a day when you gonna have to know him. And you have to know him for yourself. It can't be based upon what I say. It's what you say 'cause he said there gonna be some that said, "Lord, I prophesied in your name." He gonna say "I never knew you." It's gonna be some that say, "Lord, I did this in your name." He said, "Only those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus will have eternal life." And eternal life is what we all should aim for. You know, is to be able to live forever. And to live forever, and to live with him is the greatest gift that we could ever have. For the Bible said, "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Men are perishing. All men are sinners. The Bible said, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God and there is none righteous, but there is one that had paid for all of our sins." Like we all sat down in these chairs. We didn't turn around to these chairs to see if they was gonna hold us, we just sat right down. That's how our faith have to be is that, is what Jesus did on the cross, it was sufficient payment for all our sins, past, present, and future. He shedded his blood and the

Bible says, “For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.” So, we wanna make sure that we’re covered under the blood of Jesus, so that—. Anything else that I could say in this interview would be to choose Jesus if you haven’t already. You know, so that’s a heart-changing—. And I believe that my steps are ordered by God, and I believe that this interview was not just set up for us to talk about Huntington; it’s for us to talk about him, who loves us so much, and unconditional and forever. Forever, he’ll love us, you know. But do we love him enough to say yes to his son, Jesus Christ who died on the cross for us? That’s it.

JP: Thank you.

JS: Thank you, yeah.

JP: So much for sharing.

JP: Would you say that you’ve always had strong faith throughout your life? Did your parents attend church?

BS: They did, but it wasn’t like now. It wasn’t a life change for them. It was just what you do, you know, something you do. But when—. Well, both of them became born-again before they both died. Both of my parents are deceased. But our life—. My life growing was kind of challenging—low beginnings you know—because it was so many children and my dad was an alcoholic, you know. So it was a lot of things. And my mother was a hard worker. You know, she worked hard and she did what she could for us and it’s—. We had some challenges in life but I wouldn’t change my life for nothing in this world. You know, nothing in this world because, through it all, I’ve learned to trust in Jesus, you know. And that’s the bottom line, you know, of what we all should be aiming for you know, is changing life. You know, changing life and live forever, you know. Now who don’t wanna live forever? You know what I mean? Only those who don’t know.

JP: Would you say that the experience in attending Menchville and leaving Huntington had an effect on your faith? Whether positive or negative?

BS: I would say positive, you know, because, like I said, I can look back and see where I came from. And I can see, sometimes blinded—. You know, you can be blinded to things. And then when your eyes are open up, you say, “That’s just like a stepping stone from where I am now.” It could have been a stumbling block, but it ended up being a stepping stone because I come to the place where I recognize that where I was then, I’m not there no more. You know, and that’s a stepping stone, like I was saying. But I can look back and praise God for you know, just showing me him. You know, through the good and the bad—the good and the bad, that I could even have a mind to have this opportunity to meet you two nice people, you know, and be able to share my heart with you two.

JP: Absolutely. Thank you.

JS: Thank you, again.

JP: So much for sharing, Mrs. Stewart. It’s been a pleasure speaking with you.

JS: Yes.

BS: My pleasure.

JP: Anything else anyone would like to add?

JS: I don’t think so. Think we covered it all.

BS: Just thank you for this opportunity to testify.

JP: Well, thank you for meeting with us.

JS: Yeah!

JP: It’s been a pleasure speaking with you.

BS: You two as well.

JS: Thank you.

JP: All right.

BS: God bless you.

JS: Thank you.

BS: Thank you.

JS: Thank you so much. Thank you for telling us your story.

BS: Yeah. It was my—. It's my story. It's the real story too. It's the real McCoy [laughter]. Yeah.

JP: All right, I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording,

BS: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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